

Remarks at a Victory 2004 Reception in Denver, Colorado

June 1, 2004

Thank you all. Thanks for coming. I appreciate you all being here. I want to thank you all for coming tonight. What we have done is we have made sure we're going to carry Colorado again. I love coming to this State. It's a State where the cowboy hats outnumber the ties. It's great to be here, and I cannot tell you how grateful I am that you all have taken time to come by to say hello.

I bring greetings from First Lady Laura Bush. She is a fabulous First Lady, and she is a wonderful wife. I was a lucky guy when she said yes. There I was on bended knee in Midland, Texas. I said, "Would you marry me?" She said, "Just so long as you don't get into politics." [Laughter] She is—she's come to realize what I know, that in this job you can do things to help influence people's lives in such a positive way. She speaks clearly about literacy. She's got a passion for helping people learn to read.

I'll never forget the time she did the radio address, the Presidential radio address, and she spoke to the hopes and aspirations of the women in Afghanistan. And the feedback she got was such incredibly positive feedback. People said—people from that desperate part of the world sent word back that they so appreciated the fact that Laura lifted their souls and sights and spirits with just some kind and gentle words. I think there's a lot of reasons you need to put me back in office, but perhaps the most important is so that Laura can be the First Lady for 4 more years.

I look forward to working with the Vice President for 4 more years. I'm very proud of the job that Dick Cheney has done. He's steady. He's strong. He's reliable. He is an excellent Vice President. I used to say he's the best Vice President we ever had, until one day Mother yelled out, "Wait a minute, buster." [Laughter] But he's a good, solid friend and a good man.

I really appreciate Governor Owens. He's one of the most articulate spokesmen for compassionate conservatism in the country. I'm proud to call him friend. I'm proud that Frances is here along with him. I appreciate

your service, Governor, and thank you very much for what you've done for the State.

I want to thank Benson—Bruce Benson. I knew he would amount to something one of these days. [Laughter] Thank you very much for leading this effort, Bruce. You and Marcy have been longtime friends, and I appreciate that. You know, in this line of work, if you can't count on your friends, it's going to be an empty journey. And the Bensons have been long-time friends, for which I'm grateful.

I want to thank my friend Mercer Reynolds from Cincinnati, Ohio, who has been in charge of the Bush-Cheney fundraising effort and is now in charge of raising money for the Victory committees. Victory committees mean that we're going to have a little water in the bucket to water the grassroots, to turn out the vote. And for those of you who are what they call grassroots activists, I want to thank you for what you're fixing to do, which is to put up the signs, find the voters, and turn them out—find out who they are and say, "You owe it to our country to participate in democracy."

And don't be afraid to talk to discerning Democrats and independents too, because we've got a good, positive message. We've got something that lifts—our message lifts the spirits of this country. First, when you're convincing them, remind them that this administration has confronted serious challenges. We—when we came to office, the stock market was in decline and the economy was headed into recession. But we acted. We delivered historic tax relief. And over the past year, this economy of ours is the fastest growing of any industrialized—major industrialized nation in the world.

We uncovered corporate crimes. Those corporate crimes affected the American people. And we worked with Congress to pass tough laws—I mean, tough laws—and made it abundantly clear we're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a September morning, and so we have pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We have been steadfast and strong in our—doing our duty, which is to protect America. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of

the Al Qaida network, and I assure you, the rest of them know we're on their trail.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. We ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. And now, thanks to our brave troops and coalition troops, 50 million people live in freedom.

When we got to Washington, the military was underfunded and not very well appreciated. We anticipated the problem. We worked with Congress to pass robust defense budgets. And today, no one can question the skill or the strength or the spirit of the United States military. And tomorrow I look forward to going to the Air Force Academy to congratulate the newest class of Air Force officers and to thank them on behalf of a grateful nation for the service they're going to render.

See, I hope you can tell that I understand it is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. This is an important election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of the economy. The security and the prosperity of our country are at stake in this election.

And I've got a tough race. I'm looking forward to it—I'm looking forward to it. I'm running against an experienced United States Senator. He has been in Washington long enough to take both sides of just about every issue. *[Laughter]* He voted for the PATRIOT Act, for NAFTA, for the No Child Left Behind Act, and for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the liberation of Iraq. He's kind of like the Colorado weather—*[laughter]*—if you don't like it, just wait a few minutes and it will change.

I'm running hard to seek the endorsement of the American people. My opponent claims he's picked up some endorsements as well, from foreign leaders. *[Laughter]* He just won't tell us who they are. *[Laughter]* He was asked this question on TV one time, and he said, "What I said is true"—this is what my opponent said—he said, "What I said is true. I mean, you can go to New York City, and you can be in a restaurant, and you can meet a foreign leader." I think this whole thing is a—*[laughter]*—is a case of mistaken

identity. *[Laughter]* Just because somebody has an accent—*[laughter]*—a nice suit, or a good table at a fancy New York restaurant does not make them a foreign leader. Foreign leaders will not be deciding this election. Fortunately, the American people will be deciding this election, and we are going to win 4 more years.

The voters will have a unmistakable choice in the campaign. I mean, it's a clear choice. It's a choice between keeping the tax relief that's moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It's a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger.

I look forward to the debate. I look forward to laying out exactly where I want to lead this Nation. I've got a clear vision of how to make sure this economy continues to grow and for people to be able to realize their dreams. I know exactly what we need to do to win the war on terror and to bring freedom and peace to the world.

I look forward to debating the issue of taxes. It's a big issue for every American family. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was the President, we have left more money in the hands that earned it. And by spending and investing and helping to create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government would have.

We've been through recession, corporate scandal, emergencies, and war. And yet, our economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. In April, America added 288,000 new jobs. Manufacturing jobs have increased for 3 straight months. Since August, the economy has added 1.1 million new jobs. The first quarter of 2004, the economy grew at a rate of 4.4 percent. Over the past year, economic growth has been the fastest in nearly 20 years. Business investment is up. Inflation is low. Mortgage rates are down. More people own a home in America than ever before. The economy is strong. It is getting stronger. The tax relief we passed is working.

And there is a big difference in this campaign when it comes to taxes. I want you to remind your friends and neighbors, Republican and Democrat and independent, that

when we passed the child credit to help families, my opponent voted against it. When we increased the child credit to help families, he voted against it. When we reduced the marriage penalty, he voted against it. When we created a lower 10-percent rate for working families, he voted against it. When we reduced the tax rate on dividends that helps a lot of America's seniors, he voted "no." When we passed tax relief to help small businesses, he voted "no." I think we see a pattern here. It's a lot easier to get a "yes" vote out of him as a United States Senator when it comes to raising taxes. You make sure your friends and neighbors understand that as a United States Senator, he voted over 350 times for higher taxes on the American people.

We're now in the middle—we're now in the beginning of a campaign, and my opponent, thus far, has proposed \$1.9 trillion of new spending at last count. And we really haven't gotten into the main thrust of the campaign. He said he's going to pay for it by taxing the rich. You can't raise enough money from the so-called rich in order to pay for all these new spending promises. There is a tax gap. And given his record, I know how he's going to fill the tax gap. He's going to have to tax the working people of the United States. But the good news is, he's not going to have that opportunity.

It is very important for our citizens to understand that higher taxes will destroy economic growth. The American people will reject higher taxes. They're going to reelect a pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur, pro-small-businessowner President, George W. Bush.

This campaign really is going to be a debate about who understands how to make sure America has the best economy in the world by making sure we're the best place to do business in the world. In order for people to find work, this has to be a good place to do business, a place that's competitive with other countries around the world.

First, we've got to have spending discipline in Washington, DC. I look forward to working with the Congress to hold the line on spending the people's money. We've got to have—make sure that our country has got reasonable tort reform. There's too many

junk and frivolous lawsuits that make it difficult for people to expand the job base.

We've got to work to control the cost of health care through health savings accounts and association health care plans as well as medical liability reform at the Federal level. People in this country have got to understand that these lawsuits against our docs are running docs out of business and running up the cost of medicine.

I've been—in order to make sure we're competitive, in order to make sure people can find work in this country, we need an energy policy. I've been calling upon the United States Congress to pass an energy plan for nearly 2 years, but they haven't listened. And now, people are going to the pump and finding out what I was talking about. We are too dependent on foreign sources of oil. Of course we need to encourage conservation and develop alternative sources of energy. But for the sake of national security and economic security, we need to be finding natural gas and crude oil right here at home, in environmentally friendly ways.

We need to reject economic isolationism and be confident in our ability to compete around the world. There's some who want to shut down markets. Not me—I want to open markets. I know we're good at things. We're good at growing things. We're good at building things. Just give us a chance to compete on a level playing field, and we can out-compete anybody, anytime, anywhere in the world.

I look forward to the debate on how to make sure this country stays competitive so people can find work. We've got the right philosophy in this campaign: The role of Government is not to create wealth; the role of Government is to create an environment in which the entrepreneur can flourish.

The future of this country also depends on this Nation's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded; Al Qaida is not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran challenge the peace. If America shows weakness or uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This is not going to happen on my watch.

We are strong, and we are confident in the cause of freedom. We know that freedom is not America's gift to the world but the Almighty's gift to every person in this world. Today, nobody doubts the word of the United States of America, and the world is more peaceful for it.

America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance; the Taliban is no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance; the dictator sits in a prison cell. September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson this Nation must never forget: We must confront threats before they fully materialize.

In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence, and we saw a threat. Members of Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and previous Congress looked at the same intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our country.

In 2002, the U.N. Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. They were worried about Saddam Hussein. I was worried about Saddam Hussein. After all, he had attacked countries in his neighborhood. He had terrorist ties. Zarqawi, who's now running loose in Iraq, was in Baghdad prior to our arrival. He had funded terrorist activities. He paid suiciders to kill—the families of suiciders who killed innocent Israelis. He had used weapons of mass destruction on his own people. The world spoke and said, "Disarm." And as he had for over a decade, he refused to comply. So I had a choice to make: either to take the word of a madman or to defend the security of this country. And given that choice, I will defend America every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove him from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next election. [Laughter] We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because we acted, because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs

are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free and America is more secure.

The work in Iraq has been hard. It's been tough. We've—we faced the changing conditions of war. And that has required perseverance and sacrifice and the ability to adapt. Instead of being killed or captured on the battlefield, some elements of Saddam's repressive regime and secret police were able to escape, and they have since reorganized, and they've adopted sophisticated terrorist tactics. That's what you're seeing.

They've linked up with foreign fighters. I mentioned the guy Zarqawi. He's an Al Qaida associate. He's a coldblooded killer. He and these others are trying to sow chaos by killing innocent people. They're trying to shake our will. They're trying to frighten the Iraqis. They don't know this country, obviously. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

We will honor our duty to those who've fallen on the battlefield, to complete the mission. We will honor our word to the Iraqi people when we say we'll stand with them as a free society emerges. This is an historic times. This is a great moment in history. As a free country emerges, it serves as an example in a part of the world that's so desperate for freedom, a part of the world where people are angry and hostile because they don't have any hope.

The world will see that free societies are peaceful societies. And the Middle East will see that free societies are societies that meet the aspirations and hopes of moms and dads who yearn for the same thing we yearn for: a child to be educated, their child to have a chance at realizing a dream. These aren't easy tasks, I know that. I've asked a lot of this country, and I've asked a lot of our coalition. But they are essential tasks. They're necessary tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

I look forward to the debate on national security. Americans have a clear choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in

the world, but only if other countries do not object. I'm all for united action—so are the over 30 countries that are working with us in Iraq today. But I will never turn over America's national security decision to leaders of other countries.

And we have another disagreement that I look forward to debating. My opponent has said the war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation. I disagree. Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan. They were still plotting in other nations, and they were drawing up more ambitious plans.

After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. The terrorists and their allies declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

And winning this war requires a great military, and a great military requires giving our troops the best training and best equipment in the world. And that's why I went to the Congress last fall and proposed an \$87 billion supplemental appropriation. Most of that money went to our troops to make sure they're well-equipped. My opponent voted against the 87 billion. You might remember his answer when they asked him why he voted against it. And here is what he said: "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it." The American President must speak clearly and mean what he says.

Our men and women in the military take great risks on our behalf. And if you've got a loved one in the military, you tell him the Commander in Chief is incredibly proud. And I know you are as well.

The conduct of those people inside that prison was disgraceful, and their action does not represent the true character of the United States military. I have seen the great decency and courage of our troops. And I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is strong, and it is prosperous. Yet, we need to remember, our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citi-

zens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by: courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction: our families, our schools, and our religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of the Government.

We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups so they can receive Federal support for their works of healing and compassion. We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We stand for institutions defended by judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. The culture of this country is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father—if you're fortunate enough to be a mom or a dad, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

You know, for all our country, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. These aren't one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high and the challenges are difficult, a time when firm resolve is needed.

I know none of us will ever forget the week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It was a day I'll never forget. I remember people in hardhats shouting at me, "Whatever it takes." People

were kind of grabbing me as I was walking by and say, "Don't let me down."

As we did that day, and as I'm sure you did, and I know those men and women felt, we were—we took it personally. I took it personally. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

And during these tough times, I have also seen the character of this country. You know, it wasn't so long ago people had doubts about America. They had doubts about our character. They had doubts about our capacity to meet a serious challenge or to serve something greater than self-interest. But Americans gave their answer loud and clear. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. I saw America, just like you did, unite when it mattered most.

We're going to need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win. The world is counting on our country to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our great land, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all. Thanks for coming. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:45 p.m. at the Lawrence C. Phipps Memorial Conference Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Bill Owens of Colorado and his wife, Frances; Bruce D. Benson, Victory 2004 Colorado finance chairman, and his wife, Marcy; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Interview With RAI Television

June 1, 2004

Europe-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, it will be in a few days the anniversary of the D-day. Italy and Europe are grateful to the United States for the liberation from fascism and the nazism. But today, Europe and America are still divided about Iraq. When you go in Europe, there will certainly be some demonstration against

you. What is the responsibility of this situation?

The President. Yes, look, first of all, we share the same values—we being America and Europe. And one of the values we share is the freedom for people to express themselves. So I have no problem with people saying, "I disagree." Matter of fact, I think it's a healthy sign, and I think it's positive.

Secondly, there are—there is common agreement that Iraq must be free and peaceful. We had disagreements about the decision to enforce the U.N. Security Council resolution, but there's common agreement in Europe with America that it's in the world's interest that Iraq be free and peaceful. Today I just talked to the new Prime Minister and had a very good conversation with him. And he said, "Thank you for giving us a chance, and thank you for standing with us." And when he said thank you, he wasn't talking just to me. He was talking to the Italian people and the American people and the Brits and all the people in our coalition that are now helping in Iraq.

So I'm very upbeat and very—as I head over to honor what happened 60 years ago, I think we're now seeing unity to work toward common good today. And I'm looking forward to it.

Proposed U.N. Security Council Resolution/Situation in Iraq

Q. Yes, but some Europeans blame you for having kept them out of the decision to go to the war in Iraq.

The President. Yes.

Q. Do you think this is the real reason for present difficulties?

The President. Well, first of all, I don't see many difficulties. You mean in Iraq?

Q. In Iraq.

The President. Oh, in Iraq.

Q. And at the U.N. as well.

The President. Well, I think you'll see—

Q. The ground and the—

The President. Yes. No, I think you'll see in the U.N. there's going to be common agreement. I think we'll get a new Security Council resolution. Remember, 1441—at the Security Council, we voted unanimously to